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Chair: Mr. John Brassard



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• (0845)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 74 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022, and therefore, members can attend in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. Should any technical challenges arise, please advise me immediately. Please note that we may need to suspend a few minutes as we need to ensure that all members are able to participate fully.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, the committee is resuming its study of foreign interference and threats to the integrity of democratic institutions, intellectual property and the Canadian state. In accordance with the committee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, I am informing the committee that all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for the first hour today. We have, as individuals, Dean Baxendale, chief executive officer, China Democracy Foundation and of Optimum Publishing International, Thomas Juneau, associate professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, and, by video conference, Andrew Mitrovica, investigative reporter.

Mr. Baxendale, the floor is yours for a five-minute opening statement.

Mr. Dean Baxendale (Chief Executive Officer, China Democracy Foundation and of Optimum Publishing International, As an Individual): Good morning. Thank you very much for inviting me.

[*English*]

Today I hope to provide additional insights relevant to your investigation and understanding of foreign influence in Canadian elections and other spheres of Canadian society.

Today I will speak with two hats on. One is as CEO of Optimum Publishing, which has published multiple books on human rights abuses by the Chinese Communist Party, espionage operations by the MSS and the PLA, and triad organized crime and money laundering in Canada and other nations around the world. During this

time, I've learned more than I ever wanted to know about foreign interference in Canadian affairs.

The second is as CEO of the China Democracy Fund, whose mission is to defend free speech by academics and journalists who fall prey to the United Front Work's disinformation and suppression operations in Canada and around the world. Countless people, from the Tibetans to the Uyghurs and the people of Hong Kong, have been oppressed and murdered and have seen their culture erased by the CCP. I stand in solidarity with their right to freedom and democracy.

I also stand as a defender of democracy here at home. Canada is at a crossroads. Will we continue to remain wilfully blind to Chinese infiltration into our elections, business, media and academia? Will we continue to abandon our fellow citizens in the Chinese diaspora to the threats, intimidation and manipulation, also known as transnational repression?

I put to you that we must exercise option two. If we do not, we risk becoming a captive state, losing our sovereignty and our ability to make decisions in the best interests of our citizens.

Today, I am going to talk about one of the most important threats and tactics used by the CCP. It is called elite capture. This is the co-opting of leading individuals and public figures to view the actions and goals of the CCP in a positive light and to advance pro-PRC positions within their spheres of influence. In some cases, these persons are bribed or blackmailed, but in most cases they are simply flattered, supported in their careers or befriended by CCP operatives or agents working on behalf of the United Front. Thus they become witting or unwitting agents of the CCP.

Targets for elite capture fall into three categories: those who are already friends, those who are neutral and could be positively predisposed towards the PRC, and enemies of the state. These would include people like Erin O'Toole and the suppression operation that was conducted against the Conservatives in the last election.

Former minister and ambassador to China John McCallum became a poster child for the regime—a dream politician who was successfully co-opted by the CCP. Like many, he fell victim to their special treatment and ultimately came to believe that he was a chosen emissary and only he could best relate the goals and objectives of the regime in diplomatic circles here in Canada. This was illustrated in *Hidden Hand*, which is published by Optimum.

If we cast our minds back to the 1980s, it is easy to see how western elites were taken in. Over two decades prior, U.S. President Richard Nixon famously visited China as part of an effort to engage the country and make it an ally. The west had a bigger enemy—the former Soviet Union. China was seen as both an economic and geopolitical opportunity. Western leaders either failed to see or willfully ignored the fact that China had its own agenda, which it deployed not through military might, but through propaganda, economics and soft power.

Carolyn Bartholomew, the chair of the powerful U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission in D.C., said that they sold them on a win-win and many business and academic leaders believed that China would reform its treatment of religious and ethnic minorities, liberalize its country and embrace democracy. This was the prevailing academic theory. They believed—apparently naively—that the CCP would indeed reform and embrace the ideals of a progressive democracy. She expressed this publicly in a human rights panel that was hosted by MLI, Optimum and the CDF in 2021.

If elites were blind, intelligence agencies were not. Starting in the 1990s, CSIS had identified the threats, but the Americans began their own operational investigations, including Operation Dragon Lord, which was an American operation focused not only on the U.S. but on Canada and Australia. Operation Dragon Lord was a multi-faceted agency probe by the U.S. intelligence agencies in the late 1990s. These investigations were, in part, in response to the work being conducted by the RCMP and CSIS here in Canada.

Garry Clement, Brian McAdam and Michel Juneau-Katsuya, as well as countless other intelligence agents were investigating and writing countless reports on the nexus between organized crime, Chinese business tycoons and the PLA and MSS operations in Canada. The executive brief was obtained by Optimum authors Ina Mitchell and Scott McGregor from a former federal and provincial government lawyer. The U.S. was concerned about national security and the threat emanating directly from Canada. Much later, agencies in Canada identified these linkages and determined that Vancouver had become the North American headquarters for infiltration operations by the Chinese Communist Party.

As part of my testimony today, I've submitted the first page of the Operation Dragon Lord memo. It identifies FBI and NSA case numbers. They were investigating the relationship between the Canadian business leaders Paul Desmarais and Peter Munk, former prime minister Jean Chrétien, the Canada China Business Council, the China International Trust and Investment Corporation, known heroin kingpin Lo Hsing Han and arms dealer Robert Kuok.

• (0850)

The Chair: Mr. Baxendale, we're over the five minutes.

I'm sure many of the issues you still had can get addressed during questions and answers.

The Chair: Mr. Juneau, I invite you to address the committee for five minutes, sir. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Perfect.

Dr. Thomas Juneau (Associate Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you.

This is the third time in the past month that I am appearing before a House committee to discuss foreign interference. In each case, I focused my remarks not on the threat but on possible solutions.

The first time I was at PROC, in May, I talked in general terms about how transparency in national security is—or should be—an essential part of our arsenal to counter foreign interference.

The second time I was at PROC, earlier this week, I proposed changes to the architecture and governance of national security in Canada to try to address the structural problems in the interface between intelligence and policy through, for example, the establishment of a national security committee of cabinet, a stronger role for the NSIA and specific measures to enhance policy literacy in the intelligence community and intelligence literacy in the policy and political worlds. I also recommended that the government launch a comprehensive public review of its national security policy.

Given the nature of the important work of this committee, I hope in my brief remarks to dig a bit deeper into some of the transparency issues surrounding national security. This is the focus of some of my academic work. I was also, from 2019 to 2022, the co-chair of the national security transparency advisory group, which is an independent body that advises the deputy minister of public safety and the broader intelligence community on how to enhance transparency. We produced three reports when I was there, and I think they can be relevant to some of your work.

My starting point, as it was at PROC three weeks ago, is that transparency is—or could be, if it were more properly leveraged—a crucial enabler of national security and one of our key assets in the fight against foreign interference. Let me focus quickly on three areas in which I think we could very specifically do better.

First, given the nature of this committee's work, Canada's access to information system is broken and dysfunctional, and it fails to achieve its objectives. This has several negative implications broadly but also including on the national security front. It prevents more informed public debate, yet that would be essential to building national security literacy among Canadians, including parliamentarians. This is an essential component of the societal resilience that is our first line of defence against foreign interference and other threats. This dysfunctionality in the ATI system is a symptom. It is illustrative of how the government at the political and bureaucratic levels does not take transparency issues seriously enough.

Second, Canada performs very poorly at the level of declassification. That means declassification of historical records, many of which remain locked up for decades for no valid reason. More generally, as we discussed at PROC and elsewhere, we suffer from an epidemic of overclassification. Again, this acts as an important obstacle to raising awareness among Canadians, including parliamentarians, and an obstacle to better-informed public debate, both in terms of understanding the nature of the threats we face and also in terms of how to mitigate them. It is also, at a more operational level, a major problem inside government. It stymies and slows the flow of crucial information. Again, this amounts to shooting ourselves in the foot because of our inability to enact reforms.

Third, and last, there is a need to seriously rethink how the government communicates with Canadians through its public affairs apparatus. There is not enough of a culture of transparency in how this is done. The emphasis too often is on risk minimization. The result, more often than not, is meaningless speaking points, which often miss media deadlines. Again, this is a missed opportunity to better inform Canadians. It can even be counterproductive by feeding cynicism. This is a problem in general, but also from a national security perspective.

Often, the government communicates with Canadians directly, for example through social media, but very often the government reaches Canadians through the media, which then plays the role of a transmission belt. By failing to provide the media with as much information as possible—quality information and not boilerplate—in a timely manner, we again miss an opportunity to raise the level of national security literacy. Also, in trying to counter foreign interference, we should include much more and better engagement with local and ethnic media—and not just national media—to reach those vulnerable groups that are the targets of foreign interference.

We are far too shy in doing this. We should, for example, fight disinformation by flooding the marketplace of ideas with transparency. That is, again, our main advantage against autocracies, including China. Think about how the U.K. brilliantly used strategic disclosures of intelligence in the run-up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is a tool that we massively underuse.

I will conclude with two points. Transparency is hard. It takes time, human resources, money and effort, but if you think about it in pragmatic as opposed to abstract moral terms, it is an investment that pays off down the road, even if in the short term it is a burden. Second, change must come from the top. In the absence of political cover and political support, the bureaucracy ultimately is limited in what it can do.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

• (0855)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Juneau. That was right on time.

Next, we are going to Mr. Mitrovica.

You have five minutes, sir, to address the committee. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica (Investigative Reporter, As an Individual): Thank you.

Good morning.

I have not agreed to appear here or at other committees to act as a proxy for any side in what has devolved into a rabid partisan fixation for or against a public inquiry. Instead, I am here to raise an alarm and say something that might help you and Canadians navigate reports about Chinese interference, a matter that I once spent a lot of time reporting about as an investigative journalist. I'm also doing this in the faint hope that a few of you will hear what I have to say and then do something about it.

I have been a reporter and writer for almost 40 years. For much of that time, I was an investigative reporter at CTV, CBC, The Globe and Mail and The Walrus magazine. I have written a lot about intelligence services. That work led to a book called *Covert Entry: Spies, Lies and Crimes Inside Canada's Secret Service*. It is one of only two books of any consequence written about CSIS. My book exposed CSIS for its systemic laziness, nepotism, corruption, racism, lying and law-breaking that you and other Canadians haven't heard or read much about lately.

I am familiar with China's covert influence campaigns. I wrote a series of front-page stories about Chinese influence efforts throughout Canadian society while I was at The Globe and Mail in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It's an old story. That reporting culminated in a story about a joint RCMP-CSIS probe called Project Sidewinder.

Sidewinder was intriguing for several reasons. Its central finding, that the PRC was working with triads to infiltrate almost every aspect of Canadian life, was so controversial that then CSIS director Ward Elcock publicly dismissed the probe as, in effect, crap. A senior CSIS officer ordered all copies of the report destroyed. A surviving copy of the report made its way to me and subsequently onto The Globe's front page.

Here is where my reporting and much of the recent reporting about Chinese influence differ. Sidewinder included the names of a slew of well-known companies, organizations and high-profile figures that the RCMP and CSIS believed had been compromised by the PRC. At the time, my editors and I agreed that it would be irresponsible to publish their identities when relying solely on a 23-page report, even if it was marked top secret.

Here is the other reason I have agreed to appear. A kind of witch hunt-like hysteria is being ginned up by scoop-thirsty journalists and what is likely a handful of members of Canada's vast and largely unaccountable security intelligence structure. It's dangerous. People's reputations and livelihoods have been damaged. Loyal Canadians of Chinese descent, including one of your colleagues, are being tarred as disloyal to the maple leaf.

The special rapporteur found that Global TV's egregious allegation about Mr. Han Dong was categorically false, but Mr. Dong, unfortunately, is not alone. CSIS officers have even accused veteran police officers, who have risked their lives to protect the communities and the country they have served honourably for decades, of being compromised by the PRC. It is shameful, and this and every other committee examining this matter are duty-bound by decency and fairness to finally hold CSIS officers to account for smearing Canadians because of their phantom ties to China.

I have provided this committee with a copy of a just-published 1,800-word column I wrote that exposes the horror that two brave police officers and proud Canadians have had to endure at the inept hands of CSIS for the past three years. I urge you to read it. If you do, you will understand the deep damage CSIS has done to Paul McNamara, an ex-Vancouver police undercover officer, and Peter Merrifield, a serving RCMP officer, and their families. It smacks of guilt by association that makes the innocent appear guilty.

What happened to Paul McNamara and Peter Merrifield is evidence that, first, as a Federal Court judge ruled in 2020, CSIS has "a degree of institutional disregard for—or, at the very least, a cavalier institutional approach to—the duty of candour and, regrettably, the rule of law." In other words, CSIS lies and breaks the law. Second, in February of this year, NSIRA issued a report that found that CSIS fails to consider the damage it routinely does to the lives of the Canadians it targets and their families.

That's why I am urging this committee and every other committee examining this matter to invite Mr. McNamara and Mr. Merrifield to be witnesses, so they can tell you directly about the profound human consequences when CSIS gets it so wrong. If you won't listen to me, then listen to these two wronged police officers, who deserve to be heard.

Thank you.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mitrovica.

Thank you, all, for your opening statements.

We are going to go to our questioning now, our six-minute round. For the benefit of the witnesses, members of the committee have a finite amount of time and lots of questions to be asked about this issue, so if you can keep your answers succinct, we can get more

questions and more answers in. If they do cut you off, it's not that they're rude; they're just aware of that time.

Mr. Barrett, you have six minutes. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Mr. Baxendale, you've published several books about Beijing's connections to organized crime and influence operations here in Canada. Have there been repercussions for you personally, or for the company, for publishing these books?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Absolutely. I've been targeted by the MSS since I started on this journey a number of years ago. There are absolutely articles and editorials directed at both me and my authors.

Of course, I work with some of the most prominent people in the world, from Benedict Rogers to Dolkun Isa. Obviously, there's Sam Cooper, who was just discredited by the last witness. There are many others who have deep knowledge and understanding of what has been going on here in Canada. Yes, I've been a target, and all of my authors are.

Mr. Michael Barrett: We've heard shocking testimony at this committee about Beijing's treatment of diaspora communities here in Canada. Are you able to offer any context based on your experience of that?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Absolutely. I work very closely with the Chinese diaspora communities, with the Uyghurs and Tibetans, here in Canada and around the world. I know their stories. I've met with them. I've heard about the horrors of deaths inside Xinjiang. I've heard of the disappearances of friends and family members in Hong Kong.

Members of the Chinese diaspora community, who are loyal to democracy and freedom, are sick and tired of listening to politicians and others espouse the virtues of our great relationship with China, and that we should continue on based on the economic opportunities with China. They're very upset, and they expressed that to me. They are voices in my upcoming book as well.

● (0905)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Have you read the Johnston report?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: I've read parts of the Johnston report. I find it interesting, but I do think that both the PMO and the CSIS brass did not provide the actual readout from the meeting with Han Dong.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Does it amount to a whitewash?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: I can't say that. I think Mr. Johnston is working in the best interests of trying to bring transparency and process to a very complex issue.

Do I think that he, as a rapporteur, is in a strong position to speak objectively on the issues and arbitrate? The answer is that I believe it's difficult, given his ties to China.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Based on his ties to China, do you think that Mr. Johnston has been the subject of elite capture?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: I think Mr. Johnston, over his 40-year career, has had a positive predisposition to China and the PRC in hopes that we could establish economic opportunities and gains for all Canadians—which I believe they fully subscribed to and believed. We have seen that this kind of approach has been certainly naive and countered with countless reports in the United States, the U.K. and even here in Canada.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Based on your reading of the Johnston report, the research that you've done and the folks, as you've mentioned, in the diaspora community with whom you've met, before the report and up to this point, do you think there should be a full public inquiry?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Absolutely. Our national security and the future of democracy are at stake. We need to really investigate and understand this from all different levels.

Absolutely, a full inquiry should be called.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Are you familiar with the remarks and the question of privilege that Erin O'Toole raised in Parliament a few days ago?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Does what he describes sound consistent with how the United Front Work Department operates?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: I have countless cases and documents with declassified information reports that would support Mr. O'Toole's view 100%.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Why would Mr. Johnston have written in his report that the claims about Mr. O'Toole were hard to believe?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: I think he's been given a set of information and a very small team. I don't think he was provided proper access to documents. I think that comment is clearly made based on the information he's been given. I think he has not had all of the information, nor did he actually call a number of witnesses who should have been called to testify and provide him with a counter to what others were saying to him.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Does the government's approach to this amount to a cover-up, based on the type of information or the limited amount of information provided to the individual—the special adviser to the Prime Minister, Mr. Johnston?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: I think successive governments have leveraged their relationship with the PRC for their own benefit. It's been in everyone's vested interests not to disclose, bring out, or clean house with respect to this issue.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have about 45 seconds left.

Can you elaborate, in the time remaining, on Beijing's influence operations here in Canada?

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Beijing's influence operations here in Canada are extensive. They obviously started in the 1980s. In the upcoming book *The Mosaic Effect*, we chronicle the United Front's infiltration operations on the west coast, which was ground zero. These include influencing business leaders.

Unfortunately, organized crime is often at the same table, brought in through the United Front. They take photo ops with every political party. Their influence operations are extensive—in-

cluding into Jenny Kwan's office, which has been going on for over a decade, from my understanding.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Baxendale and Mr. Barrett.

Ms. Hepfner, you're next for six minutes. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Mitrovica, we heard a little bit of disagreement from Mr. Baxendale about your opening statement. In particular, I understand that author Sam Cooper also had some visceral reactions to your statements in the room.

I'm wondering if you have a reaction to that.

• (0910)

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: I didn't discredit his reporting; his reporting discredited itself.

I'm also astonished to hear a panellist and a Conservative member of Parliament actually suggest that the former governor general has somehow been compromised by the PRC. This is the kind of hysteria that I alluded to in my statement that is so dangerous to the reputations of loyal Canadians who have worked to serve their communities and this country. It is disgraceful. I hope that reasonable members of Parliament on this committee don't accept but reject outright those kinds of slimy allegations against loyal Canadians.

I have written about and cautioned and warned members of not only this committee but also other committees and Canadians more generally to really reject these kinds of insinuations, which began in 2010 with Richard Fadden and the speech he gave at the time, which was discredited, ironically, by The Globe and Mail, which called his remarks foolish and reckless, and he had to walk back on them later on.

I'm just astonished that a Conservative member of Parliament would infer that the former governor general of Canada is somehow compromised by the PRC. This is the ugliness. This stuff is the gutter. It really is the gutter.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: You say he was, ironically, exposed by The Globe and Mail. Many of your writings recently have been critical of media reports that have reported on foreign interference. You said, "simply because a piece of paperwork churned out by an 'information officer' with a CSIS badge is marked with any sort of security classification...does not make it true."

Would you explain to this committee the difference between evidence and intelligence and why it's important to make that distinction?

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: This is an absolutely crucial point that I have made before other committees. Hopefully, it will register with this committee, as well.

Intelligence officers produce information. That information can be embellished or edited. Oftentimes—and this is something Mr. Johnston found in his report—it is not corroborated and can be twisted to create a narrative that leads to the kinds of statements the other panellists made about Chinese influence posing an existential threat to Canadian democracy. This is the kind of hyperbole that reasonable, serious people reject.

Let me give you an example of what I'm saying. This might be of interest to the Conservative members of Parliament, who have not asked me one question about any of these matters in the three appearances I've made before PROC and this committee.

During his tenure as Prime Minister, Stephen Harper visited China three times. He negotiated FIPA, the largest bilateral trade deal since NAFTA, which was a trilateral trade deal. He also negotiated a customs intelligence exchange program with China. Now, if I were a conspiracy theory CSIS officer or a writer for the other panellists, I could connect those dots and create a narrative that Mr. Harper was somehow compromised by the PRC. Of course, that is an outrageous allegation. Even though I don't agree with and have written critically about Mr. Harper, I have respect for the commitment he has made to this country.

This is how information can be distorted to create a narrative. It is not evidence. It is not tested. This is the problem that has occurred with the media. They're taking bits of information that have been leaked to them out of context. Mr. Johnston makes, I think, a reasonable point. Unlike the other panellists, he's a serious man who is approaching the subject matter seriously. He made the point that these media reports are based on questionable information and the information has been taken out of context.

Let me go back to—

• (0915)

The Chair: You have three seconds, sir.

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: Okay.

Please hear me: Invite Mr. Merrifield and Mr. McNamara—an RCMP officer and a former Vancouver Police Department undercover officer—to appear here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mitrovica.

For the committee's benefit, we have received correspondence from both gentlemen he referred to. It's in translation and will be distributed as soon as it's translated.

[Translation]

Mr. Villemure, you have six minutes.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): I thank all the witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Baxendale, you've said repeatedly that, for 30 years now, heads of state have been compromised, tainted or, at least, influenced by some countries.

This morning, we're talking about China. That brings to mind the military co-operation program between Canada and China in 2013 and the trade reciprocity agreement in 2014. However, you have al-

ready referred to what we call the Canada-China memorandums of understanding, or MOUs.

Could you tell us more?

[English]

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Yes.

Under the Harper government, a number of MOUs were entered into directly with the RCMP. This allowed some 25 China communist agents—we'll call them "policing agents"—to enter the country to look at repatriating supposed criminals from Canada. A number of them were deported during that period of time—about 290. As well, 2,900 citizens were "influenced", shall we say. It was suggested that it would be in their best interest if they came back to China, because some of their family members were being threatened by the regime.

The MOUs exist and are reported on in our upcoming book. I think they speak for themselves very clearly.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Didn't these MOUs mark the start of Chinese police stations in Canada, at least, the one that we just mentioned?

[English]

Mr. Dean Baxendale: The operations for surveilling and suppressing the China diaspora community have been going on for the better part of two decades in an organized fashion, and this continues today. We were very aware of the police stations. The first test cases started in South Africa, where they rolled out operations in Cape Town. This is a global phenomenon, as we know.

In the United States, recently, a Chinese police officer was charged in New York with respect to suppression. That person was trained, by the way, at the Justice Institute of British Columbia, along with many other PRC police officers, who are now working around the world, understanding Canadian and U.S. policing techniques and using those effectively to engage citizens whom the Chinese Communist Party wishes to suppress.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Could you tell us a bit more about Operation Dragon Lord?

[English]

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Very simply, it was a joint agency task force, according to the document that we have reviewed. Operation Dragon Lord sits within the repository of documents at the CIA. I would encourage members here to talk to their American counterparts and actually see if they can get access to the Operation Dragon Lord report. So far, FOIA requests for the report have been rebuffed. I trust that's because there is sensitive information with respect to former business and political elite in the United States.

I would like to clarify, though, that I'm not suggesting that Mr. Johnston is co-opted by the Chinese Communist Party. I'm simply answering the question. I suggested that Mr. Johnston was certainly positively predisposed, as were many of us, toward the Chinese Communist Party, including myself, for many years.

• (0920)

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Could you speak more about elite capture, please?

[English]

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Elite capture is a process the Chinese Communist Party deploys through its United Front Work Department, which has 44,000 employees around the world. Its operations here in Canada are significant. These are through the friendship associations. Obviously, one could suggest that those individuals and organizations are here to create cultural ties with Canada and to create harmonious relationships with all of us. I think this is, indeed, part of their operation.

However, the United Front works in disinformation and misinformation operations inside Canada. The PRC has effective control of 56 media outlets in the country, and elite capture is done in a number of different ways. In most cases, it is aligning personal interests with that of a positive win-win relationship for Canada and the PRC.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Do you believe that Canadian authorities took Operation Dragon Lord seriously enough?

[English]

Mr. Dean Baxendale: First of all, Operation Dragon Lord was not known to Canadian authorities until we broke it in Washington with the CBC in March of this year. Once again, I have no reason to believe that.... Operation Dragon Lord, or whatever form it's in today, has continued on. Canadian politicians, business leaders, and their ties with China continue to be surveilled by U.S. intelligence agencies continuously, because of the potential national security threat to the United States and the Five Eyes.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Were all the prime ministers or leaders over the past 30 years approached, influenced or, at the very least, targeted by China?

[English]

Mr. Dean Baxendale: Michel Juneau-Katsuya made it clear after the break of Operation Dragon Lord. He confirmed that such investigations were taking place. He stated that every prime minister had been influenced by the PRC over the past 40 years and had been, in one way or another, compromised by people who were close to the prime minister or within the apparatus of government.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Villemure and Mr. Baxendale.

Mr. Green is next on the list.

[English]

You have six minutes. Please go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, and thank you to the witnesses who are present here today.

Like you, Professor Juneau, I am also interested in finding some solutions. I know you've provided that to other committees. I'm hopeful we can get back to that space as a committee, to provide recommendations to prevent any type of future instances like this occurring.

Professor Juneau, you stated that after the 2016 U.S. election, there was a fear that Canada needed to take the issue of foreign interference more seriously. Do you believe Canada has adequately prioritized addressing foreign interference since then?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I think the country as a whole does not take foreign interference seriously enough. That is something I've said—including when you were there, I think—in a couple of other committees, including the Canada-China one a while back. So I would say no, not seriously enough.

Mr. Matthew Green: In a CBC article, you stated that the existing critical election incident public protocol is “problematic”. Could you describe why the protocol is problematic?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I don't recall saying that. Could you elaborate?

Mr. Matthew Green: It was a CBC article we flagged that was talking about the CEIPP.

Are you familiar with the critical election incident public protocol?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I am. I'm not sure what I said in saying that it is problematic. I have said that it should be more transparent in its work, but that the basic idea of the protocol I think is correct and appropriate.

Mr. Matthew Green: In your opinion, what would be the ideal solution for determining whether interference in an election has occurred and whether the public should be notified?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Maybe I remember which article you're referring to. One thing that I did say was on the issue of a threshold. The current system indicates that above a certain threshold, a panel of deputy ministers and senior public service officials would then speak out on an issue of interference. There is a tension here, in the sense that for unelected public officials to make a public statement in the context of an electoral campaign about something as sensitive as this is uncomfortable. I think nobody should find that this is an ideal solution.

That being said, I do think that the system as a whole—of the protocol and the task force—is the right one. What I did say in that article was that there should be more transparency, not only about the nature of the system but about the criteria and the threshold above which there is a public intervention, and that overall, even below the threshold, even if it has to be after the election, there should be more transparency about it.

• (0925)

Mr. Matthew Green: Professor, we're in a minority government. We've had two elections over the last three years. What message would you want to give those responsible for free and fair elections in Canada about the urgency on a move-forward basis? What would be your immediate steps to help us safeguard not just the electoral process but also the public's confidence in the electoral process?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: That's a good question. I think that a number of steps.... I'm going to sound like a broken record, but there should be more transparency on the part of the government at the political level but also at the bureaucratic level to better communicate with Canadians about what the nature of the threat is and what is being done to mitigate that threat.

When the information comes from the political level, there is of course always an issue of trust; it will be perceived—often rightly—by many Canadians as being politicized. That is part of the challenge. That is why some of the information has to come from the bureaucratic side, but when that happens, the challenge is that it can be perceived by some as interference, for lack of a better word, in an electoral campaign by security services, which is not something that is ideal, either.

That being said, I think that right now the debate on these issues is very polarized by the dissension we're seeing today, where on the one hand some people make exaggerated statements about the survival of Canada's democracy being at stake, which I don't think is the case. On the other side, you have other statements whereby the threat of foreign interference is dismissed, which I think underestimates the threat.

There is a need on the part of government officials to be much more transparent and provide a balanced view, saying yes, there's a problem, and it's a real problem, but being as accurate and balanced as possible.

Mr. Matthew Green: You've talked about transparency a lot, and I appreciate your message discipline on that topic, but you also referenced ways in which we could be mitigating this. I am keenly interested to know if you've contemplated from your perspective things administratively and legally, from a security standpoint and from a social standpoint, beyond the transparency, because the transparency tells me that the action is already under way and has happened, but how do we safeguard against it? Do you have any opinion on that?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I would go back to some of the key points that I mentioned on Tuesday at PROC. I think there is a serious need for governance reform of the national security apparatus to be able to better deal with these threats—putting aside, as you said, the transparency dimension.

We need a national security committee of cabinet to focus high-level political debate on national security issues, which is not the case right now. We need a stronger bureaucratic apparatus to support that committee, which has to mean a stronger national security and intelligence adviser to the PM in PCO. We need reforms on the human resources level, which bores everybody out of their minds but is essential, because the human resource, the human capital dimension of all of this, is very challenging in the government right now.

We need—

Mr. Matthew Green: You're talking about recruitment and screening, specifically.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: It's at every level.

There are problems with recruitment. There are problems with retention. There are problems with security clearances with massive backlogs. There are problems with careers paths, and so on.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

That concludes our first round. The second round is going to start. We'll get five, five, two and a half and two and a half minutes.

We're going to start with Mr. Barrett, I understand.

[*Translation*]

Then it'll be Mr. Gourde's turn.

[*English*]

Mr. Barrett, you have five minutes between the two of you. Go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks, Chair.

Mr. Mitrovica talked about gutter comments, with which he's very well acquainted. He's written columns filled with disgusting anti-Semitic tropes. He's written columns including lies about Jews murdering Christian children in Europe, and he's compared the men and women who served in the IDF to being members of the Mob.

I certainly didn't add him to the witness list today. I have no lessons to take from him, and I have no questions for him.

I'll return the time to Mr. Gourde, please. Thanks.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Gourde, you have four and a half minutes.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for all the witnesses.

A number of witnesses, including those here this morning, acknowledge that there's been political interference for at least 30 years. In this particular case, that interference took place during an election period, when Parliament was in a position of weakness. Once the writ drops, fewer services are available to members. They become candidates again, so there's very little that they can do anymore. In addition, ministers have limited responsibilities and powers.

Canada was, then, in a position of weakness for 35, 40 or 45 days. Unfortunately, I think that foreign actors engaged in interference were well aware of that context and really took advantage of it. The Canada Elections Act exists to protect Canadians from irregular activities carried out by other Canadians in connection with an election, but not necessarily from irregular activities carried out by foreign actors targeting Canada.

In addition to all the existing weaknesses, there isn't necessarily a mechanism to allow Elections Canada to halt an election, even if it finds out that there has been political interference, be it generally or partially, in ridings when evidence exists that such activities took place. Often, in a short time frame, it's impossible to prove there's interference. Those investigations take time. In that short 35- to 40-day window, even if some people believe that there's interference, they're unable to prove it. Elections Canada must then let the process continue.

In your opinion, what mechanisms could we put in place to ensure fair and impartial elections when foreign interference seems almost certain?

You may respond first, Mr. Juneau.

● (0930)

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Thank you for raising this very important issue in committee.

The first thing I want to say about this is that I have confidence in the reports by Mr. Judd and Mr. Rosenberg on the work done during the most recent elections. In spite of the real threat that existed, there's no reason to believe that the overall integrity of the elections was in jeopardy. Nevertheless, we must bear that in mind.

What can be done to address the real problems that arise during an election campaign, when it's very difficult for politicians to intervene? As I was saying to Mr. Green in answer to a previous question, we want to avoid having politicians respond publicly during an election campaign to those kinds of situations, because it would obviously be seen as partisan, and no doubt rightly so. It's a very uncomfortable situation. At the same time, the public service is also very uncomfortable having to intervene publicly during an election campaign, but I think that must nonetheless be the remedy.

Some work needs to be done regarding the threshold. When it comes to interference, what is the threshold at which the panel of deputy ministers, the director of CSIS and others must publicly intervene? Perhaps that threshold is a bit too high. It should be lowered, but not too much. Otherwise, there will be too many public statements coming from the panel.

To repeat somewhat what I said earlier, I think the public needs to better understand how the system works and why things are done the way they are. That can only be done through active communication with the public, and that has to include the members. They're not well enough informed, at present. They're not getting enough information from the intelligence services to be able to act as spokespeople. Consequently, they need to be better informed.

The Chair: You only have three seconds left, Mr. Gourde.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: If the witnesses have anything to add, they can send it to us in writing.

The Chair: Okay.

[English]

If the witnesses have something to add to Mr. Gourde's question, please submit that to the committee.

Next, we'll go to Mr. Bains.

You have five minutes, sir. Go ahead.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today for this very important study.

Monsieur Juneau, when you appeared before PROC, you identified challenges in recruitment and retention for Canada's security agencies. I believe you mentioned it towards the end there with regard to one of my colleague's questions. We also heard from other witnesses before, in previous testimony, that CSIS does a poor job of recruiting, and recruiting diverse people from diverse diasporas within Canada.

What do you believe are the root causes of these challenges? Is there a culture factor that we need to consider? We heard about racism and things like that, which you also mentioned.

● (0935)

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Thank you for your question.

Just as a preamble, if you are interested in that, I would recommend two sources that are especially interesting and that go very much in depth on these issues. NSICOP's annual report—I think it might be 2019, but it may not be that year—has a full chapter on diversity in the intelligence community. It is very well done. It is one of the best things I've read on that issue from any source—academic, government or otherwise. The second source is the national security transparency advisory group, which I used to co-chair. I mentioned them in my remarks. Our third annual report, published just about a year ago now, focused very much on engagement by the intelligence community with minority communities in Canada to tackle very much in detail the issue you raised.

I want to emphasize that debates on diversity in the intelligence and national security community have become very politicized, like a lot of other debates, and are often viewed in these terms. I understand why that's the case, but diversity in the intelligence community, and for that matter in the armed forces, has to be viewed in operational and pragmatic terms whereby it's an operational necessity. When these services are not diverse, they shoot themselves in the foot. They close off large sectors of the population from recruitment. They are not able to achieve certain functions, whether it's civil-military relations on the military side, gaining information and recruiting human sources in certain communities on the intelligence side, and so on. It is mission-critical for these organizations to be diverse.

I think they are doing a much better job at CSIS, the RCMP and the CBSA now than they were 10 or 20 years ago, when the situation was abysmal, but there's still a lot of progress to make. That progress is unequal. CSE is ahead, I think, of several others. The RCMP and the CBSA have more catching up to do.

How do you improve that? It's engagement, engagement, engagement: They need to go out there with effective engagement units that are able to reach out to Chinese Canadian, Iranian Canadian, Indian Canadian and Saudi Canadian communities to build trust and open channels of communication. That's not only to get information on threats and communicate information on how to mitigate those threats but also, by building that trust and building that brand, to be able to better recruit.

All these things are connected.

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: Mr. Bains, may I add to the question you've raised?

Mr. Parm Bains: Sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: Thank you.

Mr. Juneau talks in the abstract. I've spoken to many intelligence officers at CSIS directly. I'll tell you why they're having trouble recruiting and retaining CSIS officers: The job is stupefyingly boring. That's the fact of it. You enter CSIS with this impression that you're going to be doing counter-intelligence and counterterrorism. You spend the first perhaps two to three years doing security clearance review after security clearance review. After a while, it becomes mind-numbing. That's just the fact on the ground.

Professor Juneau can go on and on about the abstract. I'm talking to you, having talked to many CSIS officers—

Mr. Parm Bains: Thank you, Mr. Mitrovica. I don't mean to cut you off, but I have one more question and limited time.

I'll go back to you, Monsieur Juneau. Back in March, you stated in the CBC article, "Canada already does a fair bit to counter foreign interference, but I do think that we could do more". Can you expand on what the government should do?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: If I have the right article that you're referring to, I was responding to a comment whereby somebody said the government does nothing to counter foreign interference, which I thought was just nonsense. The government does things. I think it should do a lot more. It was just to say that the "nothing" part was nonsense.

Concretely, what more should it do? I think it goes at every level. It goes at the political level in terms of taking it more seriously and having more resources—basically everything I said to the previous question.

I think I have to stop here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Juneau, for recognizing that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Two and a half minutes isn't much time.

Dr. Juneau, before I go to you, I want to check something Mr. Baxendale said before.

Mr. Baxendale, you mentioned that Canadian citizens had been forcibly repatriated to China.

Is that really the case?

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Baxendale: That is absolutely the case.

• (0940)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay, thank you very much.

Dr. Juneau, we talk a lot about transparency. If we're talking about transparency, it's because we have darkness. Generally speaking, darkness is used to hide something, but it prevents us from understanding the issue over the long term. Our committee was told that a number of documents must absolutely be declassified.

How can we help Canadians better understand the current situation? There's all kinds of information out there, good and bad. What would you recommend to better inform the Canadian public?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Thank you very much for your question. That's one of the things I'm most interested in.

One of the big problems we have in Canada is that collective national security literacy is low. In a sense, that's good. If you think about it, it's the result of our very secure geographical location, which is a luxury. However, Canada is increasingly facing threats, ranging from Chinese or other foreign interference to cybersecurity and economic espionage. We have some catching up to do to address these threats. This low literacy puts on the brakes and makes public debate more difficult. As a result, we don't feel enough political pressure to take action.

We could do a lot to improve the situation. First of all, we need to be much more transparent, which goes back to everything I've said so far. Canada also needs to do a better job of communicating with the media. I really want to emphasize that point. Politically and bureaucratically, the government must share quality information, not just in quantity, with local and national media, which it does very poorly.

Mr. René Villemure: You raise an interesting point.

In this age where conspiracy theories abound online, if we have reduced literacy on the other side of that, we have a total imbalance.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Exactly.

It's sort of a chicken and egg thing. We can sum it up in a few seconds: Our best tool to fight disinformation is information. In a democracy, information is our strength against autocracies, which are completely built on lies. We need to flood the market with truthful information and transparency.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Juneau and Mr. Villemure.

[English]

Mr. Green, finally, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd have to say that, in my time on these committees, I'm not quite sure that I've witnessed the type of attack on a witness that I've witnessed here today. I think, out of courtesy, I'm going to provide Mr. Mitrovica the opportunity to respond to what I can only say was a fairly defamatory attack on his character.

I will use my time to allow the witness to respond to the defamatory attack from the Conservative member, if he so chooses.

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: One has to consider the source. I'll leave it at that.

I just want to ask the committee to listen to what I had to say: Invite Paul McNamara here, and invite Peter Merrifield here.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay, I have one more minute left, and we do have that on the record. We don't need to repeat it on the record.

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: Okay.

All right. Let me go back to the—

Mr. Matthew Green: You stated that—

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: —question you asked me.

Mr. Matthew Green: Sorry, sir.

The Chair: Hang on.

Mr. Green, it's your time. Go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

You've stated that the media coverage of China's foreign interference is hypocritical, given Canada's history on foreign interference.

Can you expand on this?

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: Are you asking me?

Mr. Matthew Green: Yes, sir.

Mr. Andrew Mitrovica: I made mention of this in an article. Chrystia Freeland stood beside Jair Bolosonaro, the former president of Brazil, and tried to overthrow a duly elected government in Venezuela. The columnists and reporters in Canada praised her for injecting Canada directly into the sovereignty of a sovereign country. When we do it, it's to be applauded. When another, bad actor does it, it's to be condemned. There is an inherent hypocrisy in that attitude that I think needs to be at least acknowledged, although it's not going to be accepted by, I suspect, several members of this committee.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mitrovica.

Thank you, Mr. Green.

That concludes our first panel.

On behalf of the committee, and on behalf of Canadians, I want to thank all our witnesses for appearing today.

We're going to suspend for a couple of minutes to set up for our next panel. We'll be back likely in five minutes.

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0950)

The Chair: We are resuming our meeting with our second panel.

I would like to welcome our witnesses for the second hour today. As individuals, we have Dr. Dyane Adam, former vice-chair of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation board of directors; Dr. Ginger Gibson, director of The Firelight Group; and Madeleine Redfern.

Dr. Gibson, I see, is on Zoom.

Dr. Adam, the floor is yours for a five-minute opening statement. Please go ahead. Thank you.

[Translation]

Dr. Dyane Adam (Former Vice-Chair of the Pierre-Elliott Trudeau Foundation Board of directors, As an Individual): Thank you.

Returning to testify before a parliamentary committee takes me back to some very good times I had on Parliament Hill, not as a member of Parliament, like you, but as an officer of Parliament, specifically as the Commissioner of Official Languages, a position I held from 1999 to 2006.

This morning, I will spend the few minutes you've given me to present a brief history of my journey with the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. I have had ties with the foundation since 2008, when I was appointed as a mentor to two doctoral candidates who are now full professors at Quebec universities.

I then continued my involvement in the foundation's alumni network. I was vice-president of the network until 2015. The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation then asked me to sit on the selection committee for the president and CEO in 2018. That committee was chaired by the chair of the board of directors at the time, John McCall MacBain. Pascale Fournier, who I believe you've already met, is the candidate the committee selected.

I subsequently had the privilege of sitting on the advisory committee on the review of the strategic plan, which was led by Dr. Fournier. The result of this exercise, which was colossal, I must say, spread across the country. It really set the foundation's programs and operations on a completely new path focused on servant leadership, inclusion and diversity.

In May 2020, the chair of the board of directors at the time, Patrick Pichette, invited me to join the board of directors. I was appointed vice-chair of the board of directors in March 2021 and a member of the foundation's executive committee. At that time, I also sat on the strategic advisory committee charged with selecting the scientific cycles for the 2021 cohort, the "Language, Culture and Identity" cycle; for the 2022 cohort, the "Global Economies" cycle; and, more recently, for the 2023 cohort, the "Canada in the World: The Future of Foreign Policy" cycle.

I was also appointed to the governance committee responsible for policy and good governance. In addition, I sat on the mentor and fellow selection committee for 2022 and 2023.

That was an overview of my involvement with the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation over the past 15 years.

In closing, I'd like to say that I fully support the mission and values of the foundation, particularly since the program review and management policies developed under Pascale Fournier's outstanding leadership.

I regret that a governance crisis has precipitated her and the chief financial officer's resignation, as well as my own resignation from the board of directors and that of seven other colleagues and board members. However, I remain a member of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation because of my status as a former mentor.

Thank you for your time. To the best of my ability, I'm prepared to answer any questions you may have on the subject your committee is currently studying.

● (0955)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Adam.

The next witness will be Dr. Ginger Gibson, who is joining us on Zoom.

[English]

Dr. Gibson, you have five minutes to address the committee. Please go ahead.

Dr. Ginger Gibson (Director, The Firelight Group, As an Individual): Thank you, everyone.

I'm coming to you this morning from Treaty 6 territory.

My name is Dr. Ginger Gibson. As my colleague just did, I want to give you some context of who I am.

I was very fortunate to be a scholar in 2003. I was selected by the Trudeau Foundation as a scholar to complete my Ph.D. research. I completed that and then years later, I became a director. It was requested that I become a director and a board member. I served on the Trudeau Foundation as a board member and a director for three years.

I apologize for not being there in person today. I had a loss in the family this week. With existing commitments and that loss, it was impossible for me to travel. I mean no disrespect. I'm very grateful to have been called and I'm eager for your questions.

I hold the Trudeau Foundation in the highest respect. I served on two of the student selection committees for the past two years. In 2022 and 2021, I was on the panel that selected the scholars who would be studying and receiving scholarships for those years.

During my time at the foundation—for all the years I was there, from 2020 to 2023—I worked alongside the other directors and I observed the work of Dr. Fournier, whom you've seen. I hold her in the highest respect. Her work was—

The Chair: Excuse me, Dr. Gibson. I apologize. You're just going to have to move the mike up a bit. I did stop your time.

You have three and a half minutes. Go ahead, please.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: Thank you.

I did serve on those two panels and selected scholars from across Canada and elsewhere. The foundation is quite remarkable. The work of the foundation is amazing.

I want to comment on the leadership of Dr. Fournier, who led the foundation as president and brought in a scientific cycle that was unique. It allowed us to bring forward and celebrate Ph.D. students from across Canada and worldwide who are going to serve this country. All of the people who were selected in my cohort are now leaders across the country, and I expect the same of the scholars who are being selected now.

I saw no concerns in governance or leadership while Dr. Fournier was serving. I do consider there has been some effort to create some sense that she was not leading well. This was not the case in my experience. I left the foundation at the same time as Dyane Adam and the other seven colleagues who were involved. I was also involved in attempting to bring a motion forward to have conflict of interest declared of directors. When I found there was no path through, and a governance tangle and entanglement, I resigned.

That's the end of my statement.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Gibson.

I'd like to express, on behalf of the committee, our sincere condolences for your loss this week. We do appreciate your being here under these circumstances, so thank you.

Next, we have Madeleine Redfern.

You have five minutes to address the committee. Please go ahead.

● (1000)

Ms. Madeleine Redfern (As an Individual): Good morning. My name is Madeleine Redfern. I am an Inuk from the South Baffin region of Nunavut.

My work, past and present, is quite varied, stemming from business, law, politics and non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and local level. That includes the Inspire board, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, previously on the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, the Canadian Arctic Innovation Association, Inuit Business Council and more.

Canada's national security matters. Our democratic institutions matter. My journey into security issues truly began when I was the mayor of Iqaluit. I did two terms for Nunavut's capital city. While I was mayor, I was confronted with a lot of security issues, on a municipal, territorial and national level. Security is a multi-layered issue in Canada's Arctic. For us northerners, security issues are not just military or even just democracy. We have military infrastructure such as the forward operating location and military personnel in our communities.

In my first year as mayor, Telesat's satellite went down. Iqaluit and the entire northern part of Canada—from Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut to the northern parts of the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec—had no telecommunications services. No one could call in. No one could call out. The Internet was down. You couldn't pay for your groceries or gas. You couldn't go to the bank; you couldn't get money from the ATMs. Planes were grounded, except for a few, which had to fly, of course, due to medical reasons.

Weeks prior to that, I read a report that stated that Canada's northern telecommunications system was at risk and that the situation was so dire it was deemed critical. Thankfully, Anik F2 was able to be brought back online within 22 hours. However, it heightened how vulnerable we are in the north when it comes to telecommunications.

In our communities, we are also dealing with energy insecurity. Several of our power generators are well past their 40-year operating life. As mayor, my community faced regular power outages. Power prices increased by 30% in those two years of my first term. The generators in some of our Nunavut communities have failed or been completely lost due to fire in the dead of winter, when temperatures can go down to -50°C. This happened to Pangnirtung, when it burned down to the ground in the spring—by your standards, still winter.

In Nunavut, we are dealing with over 80% of our water infrastructure in poor to bad condition. Our communities cannot build the much-needed housing or other buildings until the water systems are fixed or replaced.

My first water crisis happened in the first year of my term, when the water main broke in February. The city's senior administrative officer and the director of public works knocked on my door at 4 a.m. to inform me that, despite best efforts, for many hours, our staff and contractors had been struggling to fix the broken pipe. They were standing in rushing waste water in extremely cold temperatures, trying desperately to fix the pipe to save our precious water. We rely on a small nearby lake for our water reservoir, and the water we have in that lake in November has to last for the entire winter and spring.

Iqaluit is now in its sixth year of a local state of emergency because of the lack of adequate water. We're watching and living the collapse of our existing water infrastructure with continuous pipe breakages. Only two years ago, the city also faced an additional local state of emergency when our water was contaminated by fuel and the military was called in to assist.

Our northern leaders must deal with security issues from the local level to the national level. That's part of the work we do. You learn quickly to adopt a security mindset. I established a pretty good relationship with the police force, the Canadian Rangers and the military, including Joint Task Force North. I had to scale up my knowledge on disaster risk prevention and response.

• (1005)

Most of our vulnerabilities and security threats come from inadequate government policies and the lack of appropriate investment in our communities' infrastructure. What I also learned is that the type of infrastructure we need is the same as what is needed in the mines and by our military: telecommunications, energy and transportation.

I have made it my life's work to work on the intersection of sustainable development and security in the Arctic region and to understand the transformative potential of new technologies. Unfortunately, too often, government policies, programs and investment decisions for decades have contributed to our very real vulnerabilities, not just with respect to infrastructure but also our economic vulnerabilities.

The Chair: Ms. Redfern, we're 40 seconds over five minutes. I'm giving you extra time because the other witnesses were short.

Can you conclude?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: Yes. I will conclude.

As mayor, I was offered free trips to China. I saw other Canadian leaders, business people, indigenous and municipal leaders, take those free trips. I'm concerned about their independence and the implications of foreign investment, especially in critical infrastructure and critical mines.

There remains fundamental risk to Canada's Arctic security due to government policies, funding programs and inadequate investments, often made by transient or distant bureaucracy, that put our national security at risk even at the local level.

We must do better. We need Canada to invest and seek to develop an Arctic strategy that attracts Canadian private sector and pension funds investment to redirect the billions of dollars that are invested in China into our north. We are a good investment.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Redfern.

One of the jobs I hate as committee chair is cutting people off, but we are dealing with a time crunch.

For the benefit of the members, we should be able to get through two rounds of five minutes and then two and a half minutes, similar to the first panel.

We're going to start with Mr. Barrett for six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks, Chair.

Thank you to the three witnesses who joined us today. I appreciate that it's an imposition accepting the invitation of the committee with all that life has to offer. Of course, I echo the chair's sympathies to our witness who is joining us online.

Dr. Adam, I'd like to ask you about the March 20 information meeting of the board, where Mr. Alexandre Trudeau spoke about the \$140,000 donation. I'd like to know if Mr. Trudeau indicated his knowledge that the China Cultural Industry Association was involved in that donation.

Dr. Dyane Adam: As I recall—I'm trying to go back in time—he did speak to the effect that he was directly involved in that particular donation and that he was aware of the implication of this association and also the donors. We had proof of that in the sense that there were photos of him with the particular donors. That's what I can recall from that time.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Do you recall why there was a strong reaction to that?

Dr. Dyane Adam: First of all, I can speak for myself. I think that's the best. We were online, which makes it difficult to see the reactions, as you know. I remember that, first of all, I had questions as to why Mr. Trudeau signed that particular donation, because normally—according to the policy—it would have been the CFO who should have done that.

Let's say it was too close for comfort, in the sense that already we had the name of Trudeau in our foundation, even though it's public funds, even though this foundation is not partisan. As you know, our current Prime Minister is the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and so is Alexandre. In a context like that, I felt that we were in a situation where we had to mitigate the risk, because it's not the best position to be in for a foundation to be perceived as having issues like links to politics or the government.

I personally felt uncomfortable with that.

• (1010)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Are you aware of the existence of any recordings that contextualized fallout from this event that any members of the board were in possession of?

Dr. Dyane Adam: Recordings? I'm not sure if that meeting was recorded, I must say.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Were there recordings of conversations following the meeting?

Dr. Dyane Adam: Not for that meeting, no.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you.

Were there issues raised about Mr. Alexandre Trudeau's vacations to the Aga Khan's private estate and the subsequent fallout or follow-ups that occurred with the board?

Dr. Dyane Adam: This was never addressed at any meetings.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Okay.

What part did Caroline Lin play during the fallout of the board becoming aware of the reporting in The Globe and Mail?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I can only say what I was told, and talk about a couple of discussions I had with Ms. Lin, the CFO.

[*Translation*]

I'm going to speak French, because it's a little easier and more natural for me.

I know that Ms. Lin and Pascale Fournier were trying to recreate the sequence of events by looking at past records and going back to the conversations in emails about that donation. These are staff members who are no longer employed by the foundation.

So they did an exploratory search to find out what the communications were. As vice-chair, I was informed that there were messages or emails indicating that there had been directives from a Chinese entity. They more or less dictated to whom the receipts for the donation should be issued.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks very much. I have only about 30 seconds left.

Would you say that the testimony of Ms. Lin would be valuable if this committee were able to take it?

Give me just a yes or no, if you could, please.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: I believe so.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you.

Several times over multiple meetings, it was decided that Mr. Johnson, Mr. Sahlas and Mr. McNiven should recuse themselves because they were in a conflict of interest.

Is that correct?

Dr. Dyane Adam: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Did they recuse themselves?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Why wouldn't they recuse themselves?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: You would have to ask them.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Fergus, you have six minutes. Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank our witnesses.

Like you, Mr. Chair, I'd like to express our condolences to Dr. Gibson for the loss her family has suffered.

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to ask you something. I saw that Dr. Redfern's speech was several pages long, and she didn't have enough time to finish it.

Could I invite her to submit her document to the clerk so that we can take full advantage of all her comments?

The Chair: Thank you for that, Mr. Fergus.

[*English*]

Ms. Redfern, if you're willing to submit that to the committee.... I think you may have already, actually, so we have it.

It's just a matter of getting it translated and distributed to the committee, Mr. Fergus.

I didn't take too much of your time away. You have about five and a half minutes right now.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus: You're very generous, thank you very much.

I am a big fan of Dr. Adam's work when she was Commissioner of Official Languages.

If I may, Dr. Adam, I'm going to ask you and all the witnesses some questions. They will be very brief and succinct. I hope you will understand that I'm simply trying to establish the facts.

Dr. Adam, were you a member of the foundation between 2014 and 2016?

• (1015)

Dr. Dyane Adam: I wasn't an active member or a board member.

Hon. Greg Fergus: If I understand correctly, you were not the chair, but a member of the board of directors.

Dr. Dyane Adam: That's correct.

[*English*]

Hon. Greg Fergus: Ms. Redfern, were you a member of the Trudeau Foundation at that time?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: No.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Dr. Gibson, it's the same question.

Were you a member of the Trudeau Foundation at that time?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: No, I was not, at that time.

Pardon me. I was a member by virtue of having been a scholar, but I was not a director until 2020.

Hon. Greg Fergus: You were not a director at that time.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: That's correct.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Okay.

Were any of you members of the board of directors during the time the foundation negotiated and signed an agreement with Mr. Zhang?

Dr. Dyane Adam: No.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: No.

The Chair: I see Dr. Gibson is shaking her head "no", so we'll take it as that.

Hon. Greg Fergus: That's perfect.

None of you were there when the agreement was actually signed. Can I just reconfirm?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: That is correct.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Were you selected as a member of the board before or after Madame Fournier became president?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Adam, my question is for you.

Dr. Dyane Adam: After.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Okay.

[*English*]

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I was selected after she became the president.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Dr. Gibson.

Go ahead, Ms. Redfern.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: It was after.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Was she involved in your selection as board members?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: According to procedure, the assembly of members chooses the foundation's board members.

The assembly includes around twenty people who are independent from the board of directors. Some people can be part of both groups.

It's a bicameral structure, much like universities. In other words, there are two groups, one of which is responsible for appointing or removing members of the board of directors. So Dr. Fournier did not choose or appoint the members of the board of directors.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Did she support the process of proposing names for the board of directors?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I can't say because I didn't see that.

I was contacted by the chair of the board of directors at the time, Patrick Pichette. I can't say what happened in my case. My colleagues would know.

[*English*]

Hon. Greg Fergus: Go ahead, Ms. Redfern.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I am not aware of the level of involvement Ms. Fournier had in my being put forward. I found out much later that it was a different member who had put my name forward. It was not her. I don't know the level of involvement she would have had.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you.

Go ahead, Dr. Gibson.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: Similarly, I think I was chosen, in part, because I was a scholar and there was no scholar representation at the director level. I believe I was chosen as a result of that. I don't know who put my name forward or whether Dr. Fournier was involved in all in supporting that. I was supported by the full board. I was an active board member and very happy to be there.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus: Were you the last people appointed to the board of directors, or were any new members appointed to the board after you arrived?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I believe some members came in after me. Personally, I was appointed in 2020.

Names are submitted to the board of directors and, as I said, the assembly of members makes the recommendation.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Very good.

Was preparing for these new members part of the work of...

• (1020)

The Chair: Mr. Fergus—

Dr. Dyane Adam: ...the CEO, Dr. Fournier?

The Chair: I would ask you to provide a short answer.

Dr. Dyane Adam: I must admit that I'm not in a position to answer that question. This is a routine thing, because it's micromanagement. We're not involved in governance.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus and Dr. Adam.

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the three witnesses for being here. As my colleagues have done, I'd like to extend my condolences to Dr. Gibson.

Dr. Adam, the foundation has several types of members. Among other things, there are family members—at the moment, I believe it's only Alexandre Trudeau—and regular members, such as Mr. Sahlas. Is that correct?

Dr. Dyane Adam: Yes, and I believe there was another member.

Mr. René Villemure: Was it Sarah Coyne?

Dr. Dyane Adam: Yes.

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

There can be up to six government appointees. I believe there is one right now, Dennis Browne, who is 93 years old.

Dr. Dyane Adam: That's correct.

I'd like us to clarify the difference between board members and members, because it's confusing. At the moment, no board member, except Mr. Sahlas, represents the family, a person appointed by the government.

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

As vice-chair of the board of directors, you were aware of the existence of the executive committee, the nominating committee and

other similar committees, much like those on all boards of directors. The foundation had the executive committee, the applications and appointments committee, the audit committee, the finance and investment committee and the governance committee.

Dr. Dyane Adam: Yes.

Mr. René Villemure: Would you tend to find the same people on these committees, including Bruce McNiven, Peter Sahlas, Alexandre Trudeau and Edward Johnson?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I'm sure you have the list of members. I've never looked into that carefully. I believe Dr. Redfern was on a finance committee. I sat on the executive committee, and particularly on committees more related to the foundation's mission.

Mr. René Villemure: Would you say that the people I named, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Sahlas and Mr. McNiven, had a great deal of influence on the foundation as a whole?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I would say so. Some of them are founding members and have been there for 20 years.

Mr. René Villemure: Yes. According to our little sheet with the dates, these are pretty much the same members who have been there for a very long time.

Dr. Redfern, you were on the finance and investment committee. In that capacity, you were responsible for administering the investments made from staffing.

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

Have investments been made abroad?

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I understand that there were. It's a question that was actually raised over a year ago when I was on that committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

Has there been any investment in China?

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: That is the question I asked. I got a response that we did have two Chinese company investments, which represented 0.07% of the total investments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: When you wanted to know a little more about foreign investment, did they cooperate with you or did they make your life miserable?

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I definitely had some concerns around the possibility of Chinese investments, depending on where those investments were.

The additional information that was provided to me was that one was with Tencent and one was with Baidu. I did google them and saw that there were some concerns around those companies in relation to the issue of privacy, especially that of the Chinese people.

I had a fulsome discussion with the members of the committee and the investment firm about how we invest. I was told that we have ESG principles that guide the investments and that quite a lot of work had been done before my arrival to help direct the firm on how we make investments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: I believe the company is Willis Towers Watson.

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: That's correct.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: You mentioned Tencent and Baidu, two Chinese companies that do have privacy issues. They are known for having a close relationship with the Government of the People's Republic of China.

If I summarize what you just said, staffing amounts were invested in Chinese companies, including Tencent and Baidu.

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: That's correct.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

Was it hard to administer all the investments? Did you have to fight on a regular basis or, on the contrary, did you have some elbow room?

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I'm sorry. I missed the end of the question in my translation.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: In your capacity as chair of the investment committee, did you have a lot of freedom, or were you in a narrow corridor? Were you forced to make decisions?

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: No, there was always an environment where people on the committees or on the board were expected to be able to freely ask their questions to fulfill their duty to get the information.

At the same time, as Dr. Adam said, we do need to be careful about getting to the point of micromanaging. We need to be able to get the information and provide guidance, but not get to the point where the finance committee or the investment committee is dictating where those specific investments go.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: I assume that Mr. Johnson, Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Sahlas and Mr. McNiven were more involved in committee decisions, were they not?

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: Beyond the committee, I'm not entirely sure how much more hands-on they were, but I can tell you that they were fully participating in the board meetings and the committee meetings, as were the other members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: If Mr. Johnson tells us he wasn't aware of anything, is it reasonable to believe that, Dr. Adam?

Dr. Dyane Adam: What did he say he didn't know about?

Mr. René Villemure: He answered all the questions we asked him.

The Chair: Mr. Villemure, you only have enough time for a brief response.

Dr. Dyane Adam: I can't speak to what Mr. Johnson said. You're talking about his testimony before—

Mr. René Villemure: It would be surprising if he didn't know anything about it.

Dr. Dyane Adam: I think he is very aware of what's happening at the foundation. He's been there for 20 years, and he's a serious man.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villemure and Dr. Adam.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have Mr. Green next, for six minutes.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, I'm happy to allow Mr. Villemure to finish his line of questioning.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Villemure, did you want to ask any other questions? Mr. Green is giving you a bit of his time.

Mr. René Villemure: I'd like to thank my colleague Matthew Green.

I have one question for the three witnesses.

Was there a culture where nothing was written down and everything was done orally?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I'll start.

I don't know if it's a culture. Personally, all the positions I've held have been in public organizations subject to the Access to Information Act. We were used to dealing with that. What's more, as academics, we like writing. We like to document our decisions so that they can be consulted, and we like research.

As I've told the chair of the board of directors on a number of occasions, I would sometimes have liked to have briefing notes to document the risks. Let's just say that the board was less inclined to produce such notes, except for programs and all that. For hotter issues, I would have liked to have had more complete notes on the balance of risks. It wasn't our practice to do this for hot issues. I'm not talking about programs.

Mr. René Villemure: My questions won't focus on the programs, but management as such.

Is it possible that minutes have been lost or altered?

Dr. Dyane Adam: Unfortunately, I have no idea. As far as I know, that hasn't happened, but I can't speak for—

Mr. René Villemure: Did the minutes mention the mover and the seconder, in the case of decisions that had to be made?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I think so.

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

Was the governance optimal?

Dr. Dyane Adam: Are you asking me or the other witnesses? I can hold the floor, but I would still like to leave—

Mr. René Villemure: It's for everyone.

Ms. Redfern, what do you think?

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: Having been on many different boards over the last 30 years, I was satisfied with the level of governance on the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation until we hit that crisis a couple of months ago.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

So governance was fine until this crisis, which has shown that it may not have been so fine after all, because the crisis was difficult to understand, I think.

Were any funds from the foundation used indirectly by Alexandre Trudeau to fund his own projects, among other things? Are you aware of that kind of thing?

• (1030)

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: It's not in your sphere of activity, okay.

Do you believe the people who had to recuse themselves were possibly in a conflict of interest?

Dr. Dyane Adam: I would perhaps invite Dr. Gibson to chime in.

Mr. René Villemure: I forgot about her because she's online.

[*English*]

Dr. Ginger Gibson: Sure. Thank you very much.

Similarly to what Madeleine Redfern said, during the governance crisis, there was no clear path through. There was a very confused

and heated meeting that we never received minutes from. The meeting was extremely long. It was a four-hour meeting. After that meeting, when we had asked the directors who were in a conflict of interest to recuse themselves and we thought we had a clear path through, there was a flood of emails, and those emails came from a group of people, a number of people who, at every turn, struck down the path forward.

There was a suggestion that a lawyer be retained to advise. That was agreed to, but then the lawyer's background was called into question. Then there was a suggestion that the folks who had been involved in the years in question recuse themselves. There was a flurry of emails about that. Then there were in-depth edits to motions I had put forward.

All of this was a very heavy effort in the context of virtual communication. There was a boxing in of movement forward, and no clear path for all of the directors to move collectively through. Draft motions asking people to recuse themselves were struck down. We tried to run those motions through a good process, but at each turn, as I said, these motions were struck down. At no point in the process did the directors from the years in question register a conflict of interest or move away from the decision-making process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Did this kind of situation, this kind of drama, happen every time the foundation received a donation, or did it only happen in the case of the Chinese donation?

[*English*]

Dr. Ginger Gibson: We only became aware of the Chinese donation by virtue of the president bringing it to the attention of the directors. Those who had knowledge of this previously had not brought that to the attention of the directors, so the answer is that we weren't aware of it. We shouldn't have been aware of individual donations like that. We were aware of them collectively, and the finance committee would have been looking at the nature of individual donations, but at the broader director level, we were not looking specifically at those sorts of matters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: In his testimony, Alexandre Trudeau said that people hadn't been asked to recuse themselves because there was no reason to do so. Do you agree with him?

[*English*]

Dr. Ginger Gibson: He wasn't involved. Mr. Trudeau was not involved in the questions at the director level, but there were motions asking directors to recuse themselves. He was not involved at that level of governance, but it is, in fact, incorrect.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villemure.

[English]

That completes our first round. We are going to go five, five, two and a half, two and a half minutes, and then I have a question at the end.

Mr. Barrett, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Gibson, you moved the motion for recusal. Is that correct?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Why?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I was aware there was either a conflict of interest or a perception of a conflict of interest, and I spoke to the chair of the board about that. I suggested that anyone who had been involved as a director or in those committees in the years in question should be recusing themselves in order to allow for independence. We needed to be able to independently review what had occurred, and what had happened. We were requesting an independent review at the time.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Did they recuse themselves?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: There was no recusal of individuals. There was a flurry and a constant engagement by people who were either in a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Could you succinctly offer a synopsis of their rationale for their refusal to recuse themselves?

• (1035)

Dr. Ginger Gibson: There was no reason offered.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'm going to direct these questions to everyone on the panel, if I can.

Have you seen evidence as to who the actual donor was of the \$140,000?

We'll start online with you, Dr. Gibson.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: It was just what was available in The Globe and Mail, and what was said in meetings. I think that's been clearly discussed at this committee level.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Dr. Adam, go ahead.

Dr. Dyane Adam: There was always some confusion surrounding who the real donors were. That was part of the issue. We wanted to be audited independently.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you.

Did you nod in agreement, Ms. Redfern?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I don't believe I could determine who the real donor was from the information provided. That was on the basis that the foundation was having trouble returning the donation.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Who might be able to provide us evidence of that?

We've heard, in relation to this, Ms. Farah Mohamed's name referenced repeatedly. Just quickly, Ms. Redfern, do you believe she would be able to offer further information?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I didn't have enough information in my possession at any point in time to know who would actually know who the real donor was.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Dr. Adams, I would ask you the same question with respect to Farah Mohamed.

[Translation]

Dr. Dyane Adam: The only time I heard that name was in a communication from the president, Pascale Fournier, who mentioned that this member had indicated that she knew the identity of the person, but really, it's hearsay. I have no idea.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Dr. Gibson, go ahead.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I'm not aware if she would have evidence or not.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Do you know what her role was, Dr. Gibson?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I do not. I believe the former CFO, Caroline Lin, could be a good witness on this, but she would be looking back. She would not have been there at the time of the donation.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'm going to ask each witness a yes-or-no question, starting with Dr. Gibson.

Do you have additional documents that might assist us in our study?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I provided all my documents to Madame Fournier. She had no access to documentation, so I provided everything. She would have selected amongst that to provide that information forward.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you.

Dr. Adam, do you have any documents?

You've indicated no.

Ms. Redfern, go ahead.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: No.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Okay. Thank you.

I think I have less than 45 seconds, Chair.

Are there additional witnesses with respect to this issue that this committee needs to hear from? If you don't have time to answer before my time is up, I'd invite you to please provide your response in writing.

Ms. Redfern, do you have names of additional witnesses?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: No.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Dr. Adam, go ahead.

[Translation]

Dr. Dyane Adam: I mentioned that Caroline Lin would probably be a useful witness to clarify certain aspects of this matter.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Dr. Gibson, go ahead.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: Agreed.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Okay.

Thank you very much, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Just for the benefit of the committee, we did invite Caroline Lin to the committee. We are in receipt of a letter from her lawyer indicating that she would not like to appear before the committee. We have copies of that letter in both official languages. I will ask the clerk to distribute them to the members of the committee as well so that you have them.

Ms. Saks, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague Ms. Hepfner.

First of all, thank you to all the witnesses for joining us today.

I just want to be clear, and it can be a simple yes-or-no answer: Is it correct that none of you who are here today were involved with the negotiations, the signing of the agreement or accepting the donation from Mr. Bin Zhang between 2014 and 2016?

Dr. Gibson, go ahead.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I was not.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Ms. Redfern, go ahead.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I was not.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Dr. Adam, go ahead.

Dr. Dyane Adam: No.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you.

All right. We've established that. We'll go a little further, if we can. Was the Right Honourable David Johnston, who is a member of the foundation, a board member at that time? Was he part of that process, to your knowledge? Yes or no is fine.

• (1040)

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I'm not aware.

I think Dyane may have information.

Dr. Dyane Adam: Are we referring to David Johnston or Ted Johnson?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: It's the Right Honourable David Johnston.

Dr. Dyane Adam: I don't know.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I don't know. It was before my time.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Okay. That's fine. Thank you.

Essentially, as this crisis that you've described came up, you were referring to documents and information from seven years prior. Is that correct?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: That's correct.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Okay, so it's the same documents that we've also seen at committee and that have been reported elsewhere.

The frame of reference had nothing to do with your time on the board in making those decisions. It had to do with decisions made previous to your involvement in the administrative decision-making of the foundation.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: That's correct, and we would not have had access to all the information that you would have needed. That's why we're seeking an independent review.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Would you call this a foreign interference issue or a governance issue?

Dr. Dyane Adam: It's exactly what Dr. Gibson said. The board wanted to know what the facts were so that we could decide what it was. If the foundation had made any errors, the idea was to look into the issue and correct them—if there were issues to be corrected. To pass judgment now would not be right.

[Translation]

That was the whole point of an independent and comprehensive audit for the current trustees—meaning us—even though we weren't there in the past. Right now, we're responsible for the foundation and what we're doing about this issue. That was really the position of the directors.

[English]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Okay, I understand.

I think we are clear here that the board wanted to go in one direction, and it couldn't go in another direction faced with that deadlock. That's why potentially you're here today.

Chair, I don't have any more questions. I'm now going to pass it to my colleague, Ms. Hepfner, to continue.

The Chair: Go ahead, please, for a minute and 40 seconds, Ms. Hepfner.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to use this time to move a motion. I gave notice on the 16th. The members should have it in both official languages. I move:

That, the deadline to submit witnesses for the study of the use of TikTok and its parent company, ByteDance Ltd be three days following the adoption of the motion, and that the committee hold one meeting before the end of June at the chair's discretion.

I won't belabour the committee with further arguments on this. We've discussed it already at length. I know Mr. Green would like to expand the study to include other social media companies, and I agree. However, I don't think it's too much to ask for one day to get this study started with TikTok as the focus.

I hope the committee will quickly accept this motion today. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hepfner.

The motion is in order and has been moved. We're just going to keep the witnesses there.

Mr. Green, I see your hand. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Matthew Green: Given that there are still two more speaking spots, I move to adjourn this debate.

The Chair: Thank you.

There is a motion to adjourn debate on the motion. It's not debatable.

Do we have consensus?

There is no consensus, so we'll move to a recorded vote.

There is a tie. I vote yea.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6, nays 5)

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We'll move on.

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Two and a half minutes isn't very long.

I'll recap. There are very different versions provided by Mr. Rosenberg, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Trudeau. They are completely at odds with those of Dr. Fournier, Ms. Redfern, Dr. Adam and Dr. Gibson.

We heard some facts that had been disclosed rather covertly by witnesses, namely Mr. Johnson, Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Rosenberg. We saw this morning that not everything was written down as we would have liked. There was some lack of governance when it was needed. It didn't seem to be a problem before. Pascale Fournier told us that she had been intimidated during the resolution of this conflict. Some members didn't want to recuse themselves from a potential conflict of interest or at least the appearance of one. I'm being very cautious.

We heard about foundation fellows who recently received an email stating that everything was fine, that nothing had happened and that nothing had changed.

The version of Mr. Rosenberg, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Trudeau says that everything is fine, while the version of former members of the board of directors and of the former president and CEO, Dr. Fournier, says the opposite.

Would you like to comment on that, Dr. Adam, Ms. Redfern and Dr. Gibson?

We only have a minute and a half.

Dr. Dyane Adam: I'll speak for myself.

I resigned. I don't have a reputation for leaving the boat in stormy weather. I've never done that. I have managed many contentious and controversial files in my career. The reason I chose to resign, as I wrote in my letter of resignation, was that I wasn't convinced that this matter would be handled with transparency and integrity.

Mr. René Villemure: Go ahead, Ms. Redfern.

[*English*]

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I chose to resign from the board due to the fact that we were losing our management and, as Ms. Gibson said, there was the value or the need of having an independent portion of the board handle it with an independent investigator to be able to assess the past facts and to figure out a path forward for the organization so that we could deal with this donation and then get

back to the important work of the foundation, which was to support the Ph.D. students.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Go ahead, Dr. Gibson.

[*English*]

Dr. Ginger Gibson: Similar to what Dyane Adam just said, I also did not feel that I could trust the governance any further, the leadership. I didn't feel there was transparency. I didn't feel there was integrity, and I felt that there were attacks on the former president, which was not professional or—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villemure.

[*English*]

Mr. Green, you have two and a half minutes, please. Go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

Dr. Adam, I believe you said that you were concerned that members who were appointed before 2018 could also be in a conflict of interest. Is that correct?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: I didn't mention it, but some lawyers called me. Maybe on March 23, maybe before, a lawyer and the CEO, who was present, informed me that they had some concerns, because the chair, Ted, was—

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green: Two lawyers brought a legal opinion of concern.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: It wasn't so much a legal opinion. I'm not a lawyer. I don't want to get hung up on words, but the fact remains that lawyers called me to point out that there was a potential conflict of interest in this matter with regard to the current chair of the board of directors and other members.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you. I only have a minute left.

In Ms. Fournier's testimony, she stated there was tension within the board because some board members, Bruce McNiven and Peter Sahlas, would attempt to make changes to the mandate of the investigation, while other board members wanted an independent process, where those who were appointed to the board prior to 2018 would recuse themselves.

Would you agree with her testimony?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green: Dr. Gibson, in her testimony, Pascale Fournier stated that you circulated a motion. What was the push-back like from the board members on the scope of the—

• (1050)

Dr. Ginger Gibson: There was push-back. As I said earlier, there was a heavy number of emails that arose every single time I put something forward. First of all, it was to destroy the reputation of the lawyer we had selected. Second, it was to suggest that everybody who was in potential conflict of interest could stay until such a time as we had an agreement. Then there was in-depth obstruction of the motions.

Mr. Matthew Green: This is my last question. Did at any point in time the notion of foreign interference come up, or did the perception of foreign interference come up?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: We weren't discussing that. We were discussing having an independent audit, and that's what we were focused on. We were not discussing foreign interference.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

I have a quick question for all three of you. Give a very quick response, if you don't mind.

Madame Fournier appeared before this committee. I found her testimony compelling and credible. There were some witnesses who came afterwards who were less than favourable in their review of Ms. Fournier's performance as the executive director of the Trudeau Foundation.

[*Translation*]

I'll start with you, Dr. Adam.

[*English*]

How would you describe Madame Fournier's performance as the executive director of the Trudeau Foundation, in about 30 seconds or less?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dyane Adam: I would describe her performance as remarkable and outstanding.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Redfern.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I was always very impressed by her, and I saw no evidence of foreign interference in any of the work that we did.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dr. Gibson.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I was always impressed with Dr. Fournier. She led the foundation very well. She had a very collegial relationship with all of the directors and led the foundation into a completely different approach.

She diversified who was accountable at the level of directors. She diversified strategically and she carefully ensured that there was access for people from all ethnicities. She ensured that there was strong indigenous engagement, and she broke down barriers to make sure that diversity was in play.

She was professional at all times.

The Chair: Dr. Gibson, I have one more question for you.

I assume you watched her testimony.

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I did.

The Chair: Would you describe her version of the events as credible?

Dr. Ginger Gibson: I found her testimony to be credible, and it aligned with my experience.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Gibson.

Thank you to all our witnesses for being here today.

Thank you to our technicians, our analysts and our clerk.

I am going to conclude this meeting.

To our witnesses, on behalf of the committee and on behalf of Canadians, I want to thank you for being here.

Again, Dr. Gibson, you have our sincere condolences.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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